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in: Witcher190, TPatricio, Adalwulf of Aedirn, and 2 more

School of the Tiger

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"If Cats are the outcasts of the other witchers, Tigers are the outcasts of Cats."
—Attributed to Vesemir, Grandmaster Witcher of the School of the Wolf

The so-called **School of the Tiger**, sometimes referred to simply as the **Tigers**, was the name given to several loose groups that appeared intermittently throughout history, formed by witchers deemed undesirable for various reasons. Most of them had either fled or been exiled—primarily from the morally dubious yet historically welcoming School of the Cat, which once took in failures and outcasts from other schools. Yet even by Cat standards, these witchers were considered unforgivable—utter failures in every sense, beyond any hope of reform or improvement. They were cast out and left to fend for themselves, under the assumption that the harshness of the Path would finish them off. Unfortunately, it did not.

This "*school,*" (in the sense of being a school), if it can be called such, emerged quite late in witcher history—specifically in 1229—when they seized one of the abandoned laboratories once used to create witchers. However, evidence exists of witchers bearing medallions depicting tiger heads as early as the late 12th century.

School of the Tiger

Tiger School Medallion

General Information

Variation(s)	Tiger School Tigers
Type	Laboratory Several loose groups that appeared intermittently throughout history, formed by witchers deemed undesirable for various reasons that after 1229,

It is suspected that this symbol was originally used by the mages involved in the mutation process as a laboratory mark to indicate a surviving subject of the Trial of the Grasses who was a total failure, and that the later symbol adopted by the Cats—a cat's head—derives from this same origin. It may have been used to designate witchers who were considered failures by the mages, but still potentially redeemable from their worst tendencies through discipline, education, and training. However, this remains uncertain.

In the case of the Tigers, it is believed—and quite likely—that one of these tiger-marked witchers killed the son of the mage Artamon of Asguth after the boy got involved in a confrontation. This event drove Artamon to publish the anonymous piece of hate literature *Monstrum, or Description of the Witcher*, which would later become one of the indirect causes of the downfall of the School of the Wolf, culminating in the Kaer Morhen Pogrom of 1194.

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	started to called themselves a "school"
Organization Information	
Predecessor	Order of Witchers [early Tigers] (technically) School of the Cat (second generation onwards)
Foundation Year	1229 (when they started to call themselves a "school")
Status	Technically extinct, but in reality is unknown due to the nature of the Tigers
Extinction Year	1283 (when the last known group was killed)
Reason(s) for Extinction	Destroyed by two witchers members of Fabio Sachs Far East Expedition, Łukasz "The Lion of Temeria" and Putnam Pitch (last known group)
Key Personel	
Founder(s)	Technically, the few mages who were not horrified by the outcomes of Beann Grudd and thus continued their experiments elsewhere—far from the judging eyes of the Order of Witchers—or surviving mages from the first iteration of the School of the Cat, specifically those who escaped the fall of Stygga Citadel and, for various reasons, chose not to join the second, nomadic iteration of the Cats. Either explanation is plausible, and the truth most likely lies somewhere in between Formally, probably members of the School of the Cat that were abandoned at the fortress of Xendell
Leader(s)	Brehen
Notable member(s)	Brehen Pulak Auran
Area of Activity	
Headquarters	Probably, Xendell, later is unknown

5.4. Third Generation
5.5. Unknown Generation
5.6. Last Known Generation
6. Trivia

Location	Probably, Kaedwen, later is unknown, most likely, nomadic
Area(s) served	Varied, due to the more than probable, nomadic nature

Etymology

The name "*Tiger*" is a Common Nordling adaptation of the taxonomic name given to the southern beast. It derives from the second part of that name, tigris, which itself comes from a verb in the Scholar's Tongue meaning "*to divide or mark something into patterns*."

Symbolism

As mentioned earlier, it is believed that the tiger was chosen as a symbol to mark those who survived the Trial of the Grasses yet were considered complete failures of the mutation process. The reasoning behind this is thought to be rooted in the early contacts between the Northern Kingdoms and Zerrikania during the 10th century. The Nordlings, in their ignorance, perceived domesticated Zerrikanian tigers as a kind of "*defective*" member of the feline family.

This misconception likely arose because the Zerrikanian envoys presented golden tabby tigers —animals which, as Nordling scholars would later discover, often displayed various issues caused by inbreeding, resulting in their unusual appearance.

This understanding only changed once Nordling biologists, natural philosophers and scholars properly classified these creatures as belonging to the genus *Panthera* rather than the feline family (*Felidae*).

History

Origins and Extinction of the First Tiger Group

Beyond their association with being a total failure of the mutation process, there is no single point of origin for the Tigers. As already mentioned, they were not one unified school, but rather several groups of failed witchers who, over time, banded together—only calling themselves a "*school*" from 1229 onwards. With the different groups that happened over time, adopting as their symbols various subspecies of tiger—likely derived from the already-speculated laboratory mark indicating absolute failure.

Their existence is suspected to date back to the era of the Order of Witchers—making them, ironically, the first "*school,*" long before formal witcher schools even existed. When the center that created them—possibly the same one that gave rise to the Cats, Beann Grudd—was shut down, they were abandoned and left to fend for themselves. Another possibility is Xendell, in Kaedwen, where, according to Artamon's words to a young Geralt of Rivia, experiments even

worse than those in Beann Grudd were conducted. Artamon himself later transformed Xendell into a cider plantation after seizing it with his allies, thus extinguishing—if this account is correct—the first group of Tigers, as it is unknown whether any survived.

Thus, as mentioned prior, those who came afterward bore no direct continuity to these original failures—making the later Tigers emerge mostly from the School of the Cat.

It is said that among the earliest members of the School of the Griffin, there was a long-standing belief that one of the reasons for the downfall of the Order—members tricking each other out of contracts and even threatening to kill one another if they didn't move on—was due to the Tigers. And while there maybe a grain of truth in this, it is just as likely that it was mostly a form of cope—a way to rationalize the slow decay of what had once been a knightly order, since its decline stemmed from multiple causes, not merely the Tigers.

On the other hand, it is suspected (though never confirmed) that the reason witchers of the School of the Viper began taking contracts against humans and non-humans was not originally due to a lack of morality or neutrality (as with the Cats), but rather—at least at first—to hunt down the Tigers and their creators, who were bringing so much harm and dishonor to the profession.

Confirmed Origins

As mentioned before, although their existence was suspected as far back as the era of the Order of Witchers (i.e. the 10th century), they were not known to exist beyond doubt until the late 12th century, when recorded incidents began to appear involving witchers bearing tiger-head medallions along the western coast. Until then, their existence was considered nothing more than rumor.

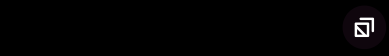
It is believed that these first confirmed Tigers emerged from members of the second iteration of the School of the Cat—namely, the inhabitants of the nomadic Dyn Marv Caravan.

These witchers either fashioned their medallions into the shape of a tiger to distinguish themselves from their peers (perhaps inspired by the supposedly earlier Tigers), or the Cats themselves used the tiger motif to mark those in whom their process of corrupt mutations had not been entirely successful (perhaps also inspired by this supposed earlier tigers)—until those individuals committed deeds so horrific that even the Cats rejected them. These outcasts then banded together and, in doing so, became what would later be known as the Tigers.

The truth likely lies somewhere between what is factually known and what is discussed in the earlier section on origins: that is, failed witchers who were exterminated in earlier times, and whose example was later adopted by the Cats not as a symbol of shame but as a mere marker of distinction for their own failures—until, once again, those bearing the mark committed the aforementioned atrocities. The same, perhaps, applies to the origin of their medallions, explaining why later groups continued using the tiger motif.

Early Years

If Artamon's words are to be believed, as mentioned before, it is likely that the first Tigers originated in Xendell.



A medallion that supposed belonged to one of this early Tigers

They were probably the result either of the few mages who were not horrified by the outcomes of Beann Grudd and thus continued their experiments elsewhere—far from the judging eyes of the Order of Witchers—or of surviving mages from the first iteration of the School of the Cat, specifically those who escaped the fall of Stygga Citadel and, for various reasons, chose not to join the second, nomadic iteration of the Cats. The most likely reason being simple survival—since those new Cats harbored a deep hatred toward the mages who had experimented on them.

Either explanation is plausible, and the truth most likely lies somewhere in between.

This would also explain why the witchers of the Old Order knew so little about their existence—encounters with these early Tigers were rare due to their complicated nature and not being still "*perfected*" by those mages, and any sightings during the age of the witcher schools were later attributed to the Cats because of the physical and behavioral similarities. This misidentification persisted until the emergence of the so-called "*feline Tigers*" much later.

These early Tigers were, in essence, created illegally—far from the Order's supervision, in a laboratory that had willingly abandoned its standards in the name of *"pure science."* This also reinforces Artamon's comment about Xendell being a place of "*experiments worse than those of Beann Grudd.*"

It would likewise explain how the Tigers could have existed both during the final days of the Order and the emergence of the schools, without ever being regarded as a school themselves. The mages behind them approached witchers as experimental subjects, not as disciples—and this clinical viewpoint passed on to their creations. Only with the rise of the second generation of Tigers—those originating from the Cats—did the concept of a "*school*" appear among them. Thus, it was not until 1229 that they began to consider themselves a school at all, most likely after reclaiming Xendell following Artamon's death at the hands of a young Geralt of Rivia. (Though some accounts claim his death occurred slightly later, in March of 1230.)

Formation of the "School" of the Tiger

If everything stated by Artamon is true, then the first Tigers would have perished sometime between, at the earliest, the 1170s, and at the latest, the 1180s. This would have left more than enough time for the mage to not only repurpose the fortress, but also to build influence against the witchers and thoroughly prepare the Kaer Morhen Pogrom of 1194.

If this is the case, the fortress would have been occupied for a period of 49 years. Its separation from the Order, as an independent laboratory, would have occurred sometime between 958 and the 970s, leaving at least 222 years during which the mages could have conducted several field trials with their creations—thus explaining both the few sightings of them, and why they did not emerge more publicly. Likely, those field trials were a failure, in addition to what Artamon himself said about the experiments conducted there.

Given the nomadic nature of the Cats, it is assumed that they may have taken the fortress in 1229 as a temporary place to winter. There, they would have discovered everything left behind by the Tigers, adopted the tiger emblem to mark some of their own, and abandoned those individuals —the latter second generation of Tigers— in the fortress once they committed acts that even the Cats could not tolerate.

These abandoned witchers, banding together—likely out of sheer rage rooted in abandonment —may have decided to take advantage of the fortress and form a new school: the School of the Tiger.

However, since there were no reports of Tigers being sighted in an organized manner like members of the other schools throughout the 13th century, and given their characteristics described later in the text, it is believed that—due to internal conflicts and possibly external pressure (most likely from frightened local populations)—this school, or more accurately, this attempt at one, lasted only a short time. The Tigers who followed became more akin to a pack than a fully-formed, structured school.

Existence as a "School"

If the rumors that followed Artamon's death are to be believed, the figures who most closely resembled founders of the Tigers would have been a mix of rogue mages from both the early Tigers and the first iteration of the School of the Cat composed by Anluan, Drerkan, Dutrek, and Ensar. According to these accounts, at least those belonging to the Early Tigers, sought to fully militarize Alzur's project and, for that reason, they separated from the Order after the closure of Beann Grudd to establish an independent laboratory, while those coming from the first iteration of the Cats wanted just to continue experimenting in the name of science and progress.

Among the so-called "*feline Tigers,*" the figure most similar to a founder was Eachann of Vespaden—known simply as Eachann—who, through sheer force of will (the exact kind of coercion is unknown), managed to keep the first Tiger group together. This original group was said to consist of Iegnik, and two witchers from the School of the Wolf who had been exiled and accepted into the Cats and were later abandoned in the fortress: Luka and Dermot Marranga.

According to rumors, the Tigers may have occupied their supposed fortress for around thirty years. During that time—and very much in the spirit of both the Cats at their worst and the mages who created the earlier failed witchers—they allegedly attempted to correct their flaws by experimenting on new subjects, whom they had abducted over the years. The outcome of

these experiments remains unknown, and rumorology vary wildly.

As for the supposed serial-killer witchers—said to be the result of Tiger experimentation and who allegedly terrorized Kaedwen until the 1260s—these remain only that: suppositions. Given the average commoner's hostility toward witchers, it is more likely that many of the culprits were not witchers at all, much less Tigers, and that blame was simply cast upon them as it often is upon other non-humans.

What is known for certain is that new members from the Cats joined during this period: Auran, Krisadeva of Cidaris, Haiwit of Melukka, and finally Thornwald—another Wolf-turned-Cat-turned-Tiger. Haiwit is said to have killed Eachann and claimed leadership. By the 1260s, Xendell—if it had indeed been reoccupied after Artamon's death—was abandoned after a magnitude 3 earthquake struck the area. The quake was allegedly caused by druids hired by the local populace to kill or drive the witchers away. This, combined with the more than probable internal conflicts already mentioned, likely marked the end of the fortress as their home and thus the existence of the Tigers as a school. As usual, the truth almost certainly lies somewhere in between all versions of the story.

Nomadic Years

Following the presumed abandonment of Xendell, it is believed the Tigers became nomadic. How they traveled is unknown. Many suspect their method was similar to that of the Cat School's caravan. What is known with certainty, based on scattered reports, is that they took on every kind of contract—ranging from traditional monster slaying to the assassination of political rivals on behalf of nobles—much like the Cats. The only difference was this: where the Cats refused a job for being too extreme—even for them—the Tigers stepped in.

This group is believed to have been led initially by a witcher named Valmi, though some sources claim Seamus held command. What is certain is that sometime between 1259 and 1269, the infamous Cat of Iello—cast out from his school in 1242—appeared and seized control, killing the previous leader as was customary among the Tigers. From that point onward, he turned the Tigers into their worst incarnation, until, in the 1280s, during Fabio Sachs' expedition to the Far East in Eastern Barsa, the witchers Putnam Pitch and Łukasz seemingly wiped out the group—bringing the school to its apparent extinction.

According to rumor, this final iteration was composed of survivors from multiple generations of Tigers—witchers who had endured every upheaval the school suffered. A few late additions reportedly joined and replaced those who died during this period.

If Seamus was indeed one of their leaders, some believe he may not have been killed by Brehen, but instead faked his death—possibly using Zangvebarian venom. This theory is supported by reports from the time of the Third Northern War (1271–1272) of a witcher named Seamus traveling with the hansa of the elven traveler Siriol de Arian. Strangely, no school was ever attributed to him, and he displayed an unusually strong—almost excessive—sense of responsibility. Some attribute this to a mix of a dark past and one of the mental conditions

often rumored among Tigers.

As for why this group is believed to have been the last—and why it cannot be said with certainty—it is simple: In 1269, the second iteration of the School of the Cat—and thus the School of the Cat itself—came to an end when Nilfgaardian soldiers captured their caravan. Some claim that after this, the surviving Cats split into multiple splinter groups—feline or feline-adjacent—one of which may have taken up the mantle of the supposedly extinct Tigers.

Probable Extinction

In the spring of 1283, Fabio Sachs' expedition to the Far East passed through Eastern Barsa, on their way to the supposedly mythical (later proven real) kingdom of Buyan.

During roughly half of their stay in the region, the group came across a series of massacres. Driven by goodwill toward the local authorities of the lands they were crossing, they decided to investigate.

Soon enough, their inquiry led them to discover that the perpetrators were none other than witchers. These killings were not due to personal motivations or self-defense—as had happened on occasion with certain members of the School of the Cat who "*went too far*"—but had been committed for another reason entirely. They concluded that someone had paid them to do it.

After days of observing patterns and following tracks, the expedition split into two groups. This allowed them to uncover both the motivations of the witchers and, in the case of the group accompanied by Łukasz, to eliminate nearly all of them—except for one. From their medallions, they discovered these witchers were Tigers. The lone survivor, Clovis, was spared by Lukasz due to his apparent remorse over his actions. However, given the brutality of the Barsameni desert and the fact he was never seen again, he is presumed dead.

Not long after learning this, Lukasz's group discovered the reason behind the atrocities: they had been committed not only to destabilize the region and terrify its population, but had also been funded by Nilfgaard as part of a plan to expand its influence eastward, beyond the western territories of the land of the taifas. The group's intervention—though only temporarily—delayed imperial interests in the area. The Ofieri influence in the region was not much better, but between two evils, they chose what they considered the lesser.

The other group, the one with Putnam, eliminated the remaining members and in the process discovered the identity of their leader: Brehen. Almost immediately afterward, knowing of Brehen's infamy, Putnam sought to kill him. The duel was grueling, but Putnam ultimately emerged victorious—at the final moment, while Brehen was strangling him with a silver chain, Putnam fought dirty and drove Brehen's own dagger into his heart.

And with Brehen's death, the so-called School of the Tiger came to an end—or so most believe.

Characteristics

> "*Only for the good and the just, right?, damn hypocrites!*"
> —Brehen

Most Tigers earned their name (and almost certainly their probably laboratory designation) due to a combination of their behaviour and physical appearance.

Unlike the Cats, whose members often suffered from a wide range of mental instabilities—particularly in the second iteration of their school, where due to their heightened emotions, their increased aggression and sadistic tendencies were paradoxically coupled with the potential for extreme empathy (many of them developing conditions such as borderline personality disorder and others of similar kind)—the Tigers were different.

They did not experience emotional volatility. Instead, most of them exhibited traits associated with antisocial personality disorder, psychopathy, narcissistic personality disorder, and similar conditions. This, in part, is why they were compared to tigers—territorial, solitary, savage, brutal in nature.

Physically, they were usually slim and extremely pale, often with dark circles beneath their eyes and unusual skin or hair pigmentation. Many suffered from vitiligo, which made them resemble a tiger even more, as people where reminded of the striped patterns of the animal. Quite a number possessed red irises, a secondary effect of the failure in the mutation process which resulted of low melanin production, which caused them the disavantage of being extreme sensitivity to light. Others developed excessive canine teeth after they survived the Trial of the Grasses, once their milk teeth started to fell out during the rest of their childhood.

In certain cases of survival, but complete failure of the mutation process, they displayed uniformly black eyes, or feline-like pupils set within black or similarly dark irises.

Some Tigers even developed unusual side effects: dogs—usually friendly toward witchers—would be terrified of them, or they displayed mild telepathic abilities.

It should be emphasized that, despite the consequences of being failures of the mutation process, the Tigers were not inherently evil. Much like their Feline counterparts, their condition did not imply villainy in and of itself—only damage.

It is likely that, much like with self-fulfilling prophecies such as the Curse of the Black Sun, their descent into evil stemmed more from conditioning—the fact that, at least the early Tigers, were products of a laboratory—than from any natural inclination toward evil. The psychological and physical errors that manifested after Trial of the Grasses were, in many, if not all cases, simply an added burden.

And just as with humans, it is reasonable to assume that—even among those afflicted with severe mental disorders such as the already mentioned antisocial personality disorder,

psychopathy, narcissistic personality disorder, and similar conditions—there were still "*good*" Tigers. Such conditions, while making a traditionally "*decent*" life difficult, do not make benevolence impossible. As the common saying goes: "*Even a broken clock is right twice a day.*"

Their combat style was rough, fast, and brutally efficient, focused on delivering killing blows as quickly as possible. To do this, they used short swords, often shaped like claws or in unusual but otherwise effective in their function form. They were agile and frequently used dirty tactics. Rarely did they toy with their opponents. Their fighting resembled that of the Cats, but twisted—far more violent, less acrobatic, and devoid of elegance.

A Tiger Steel Shortsword

To fight monsters, they used longer swords, more specifically, rapiers, done in the usually witcher silver sword alloy, to penetrate the monster´s skin with fast but profound attacks that caused it to bleed a lot, and thus kill it sooner rather than later.

A Tiger Silver Rapier

Unlike the Cats—who wore light armor—the Tigers, across their various eras, favored only basic protection combined with standard clothing. Their gear covered solely the most vital or mechanically essential parts of the body: the heart, joints, ankles, feet, hands, and shoulders.

The reason behind this specific choice of protection remains unknown. Many speculate it was tied to the psychological nature of most Tigers, along with considerations of the mages derived from field-testing conditions.

It is also likely that this quasi-armor was what enabled their distinct combat style—a brutal, stripped-down evolution of the Cat School's technique.

It has been reported that, unlike other witcher schools—which based their structure on the hierarchical model of knightly orders with a Grandmaster at their head—the Tigers, whenever they gathered, organized themselves more like a pack than even a band of mercenaries. Within this pack there was a clearly defined leader who, according to rumor, could be challenged at any time by any other member to a duel to the death. Should the challenger succeed in defeating and killing the leader, they would assume the title in their place.

However, it must be noted that this description did not apply to all Tigers across time. Due to their fractured origins and the existence of multiple groups rather than a single centralized

school (despite their attempt) , their characteristics—while sharing key similarities—varied as their composition shifted from one generation of outcasts of the outcasts to another.

Regarding female witchers within their ranks, nothing is known for certain. Since most Tigers originated from the School of the Cat—the creators of the formula that allowed for the mutation of women—it is believed that perhaps one Cat witcheress, turned "*tigress*," might have joined their numbers at some point. However, like many other aspects of their history, this remains a mystery.

Notable Members

For the full list of known Tiger Witchers and Rogue Tiger-affiliated Mages, see *Category:School of the Tiger.*

Mages (rumored)

- Anluan
- Drerkan
- Dutrek
- Ensar

First Generation (probably)

- Bertram Tauler
- Conlao
- Feethast

Second Generation

- Dermot Marranga (also known as Dermont)
- Eachann
- Iegnik
- Luka

Third Generation

- Auran
- Haiwit of Melukka
- Krisadeva
- Thornwald

Unknown Generation

- Ajatasu
- Gwidon
- Seamus
- Valmi

Last Known Generation

- Aona
- Brehen (Last known leader)
- Chireadan
- Clovis
- Pulak

Trivia

- The physical characteristics of the Tigers are based on the description of the witcher class presented in the TTRPG *Wiedźmin: Gra Wyobraźni*. This is both a tribute—since it was the first Witcher tabletop RPG—and a way to salvage some of its stranger ideas about witchers, adapting them so they fit the current lore. These traits are therefore justified as the result of failures from the mutation process or corrupted mutations, rather than being the norm among witchers—because they are not. (For example, the hair: Geralt and Preston Holt only gained their white hair due to undergoing additional mutations. Likewise, the idea that dogs fear witchers is not supported by either the books or the games.)

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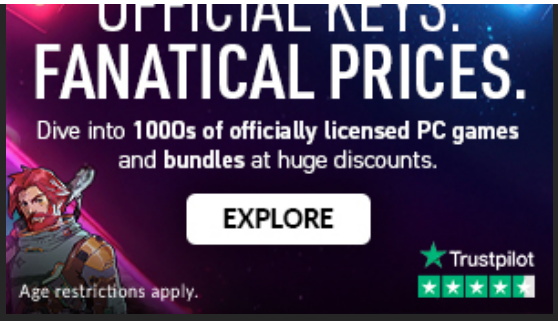

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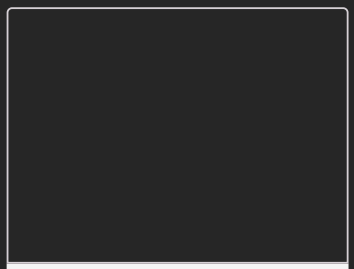

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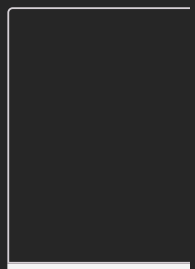

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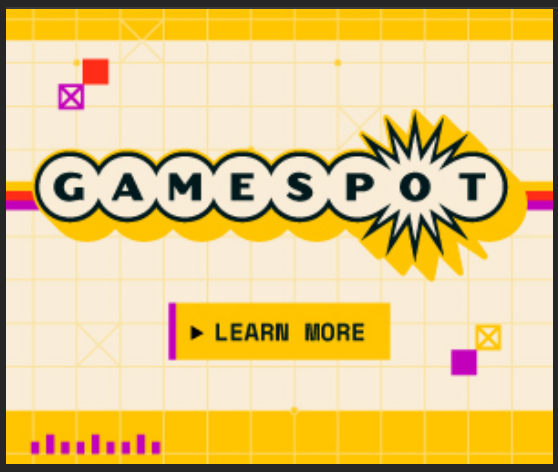

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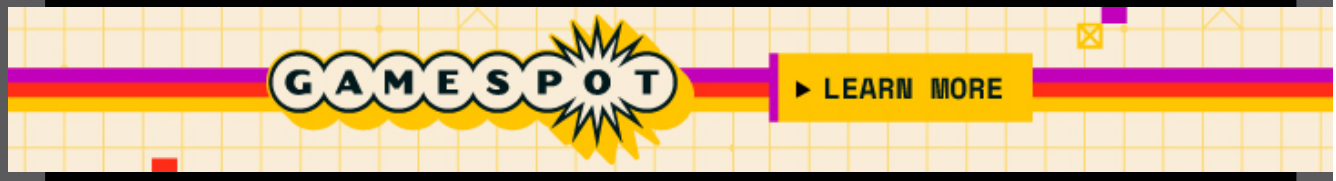

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